

THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

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The magician dismissed her and she vanished. The woman had been brought from a village about three miles off, and, on inquiry, my acquaintance found that, at the time when she had been brought before them, she was making bread in her house, when her dress would, of course, be covered with flour! After this remarkable exhibition my acquaintance told me that he felt that the magician really had some extraordinary powers.

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The object of one of the spells possessed by my magician friend is "to make a king or any governor merciful to his subjects, and to ensure his granting any request made to him." To make such a spell effective the following procedure is adopted. At sunrise the magician makes a fire of wood, or, perhaps, charcoal, or cow-dung,¹ but not of *būṣ*. In this fire he will put two kinds of incense, ordinary frankincense and incense scented with musk. While the incense is burning the magician will repeat the names of the angels who are in the fourth heaven, and the name of their leader, seven times. The name of the leader of the angels in the fourth heaven is Kilimya.

After he has finished this repetition he pronounces a formula beginning: "O angels, and leader of the angels of the fourth heaven! O Sun, which gives light all over the world!" Then he again addresses the sun, saying, "I pray you, O Sun, for the sake of the chief king [or governor, as the case may be, mentioning also his name and the name of his mother] that you may make his heart kind to so and so [*i.e.*, the suppliant]." Then the magician writes a charm and gives it to the petitioner.

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The charm consists of a repetition of the names of the angels in the fourth heaven, and it must be worn under the left arm. Such charms are usually enclosed in a small leather case, which is suspended by a cord from the neck in such a way that it hangs underneath the arm.

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If a man wishes to injure an enemy by making him unconscious he will go to a magician, who will tell him to bring some *'urūk el-fūweh* (roots of madder), the seeds of leeks, the fat of a crow, the fat of a tortoise (*fakrūn*),² and onion seeds. These ingredients, I am told, can be purchased at the shop of a village grocer. He must then light a fire and throw into it the five articles mentioned above. The smoke coming from this fire will make anyone who

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¹ See pp. 154 f.

² Professor Margoliouth tells me that *fakrūn* is a Berber word, so possibly this particular magical receipt was brought into the country by Arabs or Moors.

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because the *Jinn* (lit. the "Helpers") have brought some of them from India, and others from Sind or from the land near to the mountains of Kāf,¹ and other such nonsense and absurdities, "as to which Allah has sent down no authority."²

Sometimes certain of the women request her to allow them to enter the darkened chamber that they may participate in the "blessing" (*baraka*) of the *Afrīl*, to enable them to obtain their ends. (For this she receives another "tip.") One of them thereupon enters the chamber which is pitch black. After a short time she hears either a weak voice, or a loud one which utters the name of her sick one, or her own name, if she be the patient, and explains to her the date of the illness which has afflicted her or her sick one. It assures her that its "helpers" have undergone great suffering and distress in the course of producing the beneficent antidote (or rather the maleficent poison) from the ends of the inhabited world, and that the invalid will be cured after a few days.

[p. 29.] The truth of the matter is that the ill-omened old hag has employed certain women (who consider themselves brokers or traffickers, and so on, and who have the entrée into every house) as her spies to bring her news of patients in every village and hamlet, and the date of their illness, in full detail, as for example, that no child of such a woman is living, and that so and so is barren, and so forth, according to their methods of deceit and their innumerable ways of stratagem and chicanery.

One of the duties of these women is to advise sick women or others to go to Shaikh Sid Ahmed, when such a scene as the one we have described takes place. There is nothing of course in the chamber of the so-called Shaikh except the old woman herself who has already become acquainted with what the spies have conveyed to her, and which she repeats, not in her own voice of course, to the sick woman, or to one of her relatives, who implicitly believes in the Shaikh, and impoverishes herself in order to propitiate him.

¹ [In Islamic cosmology the mountain range that surrounds the earth. Tr.]

² [Koran, xii, 40; liii, 23, etc. Tr.]